Global mobilities

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Abstract

This chapter discusses migration and asylum, embodied in migrants and refugees, in light of feminist scholarship on human mobility. It presents a concise overview of the main research themes that this scholarship has addressed, and connects these themes to the evolving field of feminist peace research. The central argument of the chapter is that, to advance feminist peace research on the topic of human mobility, it is necessary to adapt an intersectional approach that takes seriously the diversity of positionalities of people on the move, and treats categorizations between people as well as within academic production cautiously in order to pursue greater social justice across the globe.

Introduction

Migration scholars have problematized for long any easy distinctions between 'voluntary' and 'forced' migration that lead to a categorical separation between 'economic migrants' and 'refugees'. Indeed, when engaging with real life people, however, these categories tend not to be clear-cut but, instead, degrees of choice and lack thereof become visible. This diversity illustrates how categories are blurred (McGregor, 2007; Kynsilehto, 2011) and how they depend on the perspective that is adopted. Likewise, as Crawley and Skepalis (2018; also Zetter, 2007) argue, the labelling of people on the move serves political purposes. For European audiences this became evident for example during the mass movements across the continent during the latter half of 2015 onwards, namely in the ways in which these movements were addressed in the media and political discourse alike: whether the population movements and the political deadlock situations that were created as regards the responsibility-sharing between the European Union's member-states were called 'migrant crisis' or 'refugee crisis' (see Kynsilehto, 2017). In a similar vein elsewhere, the movement of Central Americans across Mexico and towards the United States border during 2018 was called a 'migrant caravan', while many of those who had joined the caravan claimed that they were fleeing persecution and violence that would have characterised them as refugees

instead. These labels underscore the idea of those deserving to be welcomed as they are considered as having genuine reasons for leaving and not going back – refugees – and those who are moving in search of new opportunities and better life – migrants – and thus undeserving as they are not considered as having legitimate reasons and are, instead, portrayed as abusing the system by violating border policies.

In this chapter, 'migrant' is used as a generic term referring to a person who has moved from one country to another for any reason. 'Refugee' is used referring to the specificities of forced migration, taking into account the particular responsibilities of receiving states as regards to persons who seek international protection, in particular the principle of *non-refoulement*; a legal principle that can be translated as interdiction to return a person who seeks international protection to a place where her or his safety cannot be guaranteed. However, reasons for fleeing are multiple and not all of them are equally recognised by international legal instruments such as the Geneva Refugee Convention of 1951 and its Additional Protocol 1967, and national asylum laws and asylum systems in countries where these exist. One of these is gender-related persecution that is not named explicitly among the five criteria – race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group and political opinion – defined in the Article 1 of the 1951 Convention, but has been added by later Gender Guidelines as one dimension or potential interpretation of belonging to a particular social group (e.g. Freedman, 2007, pp. 69–107; Sadoway, 2008). Thus 'refugee' refers here at the same time to the legal status the person holds via refugee status determination (RSD) process conducted either by the UN Refugee Agency UNCHR or the receiving state, and the self-assessment of the person concerned on whether he or she could return safely to the country of origin or not. The latter is necessarily a broader definition of refugee.

The chapter begins by introducing feminist scholarship on migration and asylum in a concise manner. It then moves on to ask how feminist peace research has addressed issues related to human mobility, and how these issues could be addressed, taking its cue from the insights of broader feminist studies on human mobility. These connections between different fields are important, and coupled with intersectional and decolonial analysis, their combination could yield results that would benefit the pursuit towards fulfilling goals of greater social justice across the globe.

Feminist approaches to global mobility

Feminist scholarship on human mobility has evolved in parallel with developments in feminist theorizing and other gender-specific analyses. The first phase concerned the question on where the women are in analyses of migration. This insight emerged from the simultaneous realisation of women being increasingly present among different categories of migrants – including refugees – and nationalities undertaking international migratory moves, referred to as feminisation of migration, and of their absence in academic analyses on migration that tended to operate, albeit not in an explicit manner, using male migrants' experiences as the starting point (Morokvaśic, 1984). The insight concerning the feminisation of migration has been "rediscovered" several times since, latest of which came to the fore in the beginning of the new millennium (e.g. Sassen, 2000; Castles and Miller, 2003).

In the meantime, feminist scholars working not only from the premises of migration or refugees studies but from a variety of academic disciplines such as human geography, economics, political studies, international relations and social anthropology, have examined mobility and gender connecting these to debates on economy, labour market structures, family formation, security and armed conflicts. In these analyses, the focus has no longer remained on enquiring after women and their experiences only, but the entanglements of gender and mobility have been examined from diverse perspectives concerning people on the move, and those whose lives are impacted by global mobilities in manifold ways even if they stay put.

In line with developments in feminist scholarship more broadly, intersectional approaches to human mobility began to extend in scope in the new millennium. Intersectionality as a starting point takes seriously the diversity of dimensions in social positioning. Drawing on and closely connected with queer theory (e.g. Luibhéid, 2008; Manalansan IV, 2006), the focus is not on gender as a uniform variable but, instead of limiting the guiding question to inquiring after women, men or non-binary individuals in general, the analysis proceeds by asking what kind of women, men or non-binary individuals are in question, in terms of age, social class, dis/ability or sexual orientation, for example, and how varying combinations of these are enacted and bear upon different phases of the migratory process. Intersectional analyses have also entailed a critical engagement with categories such as 'skilled migrant' or 'family migrant' used in migration research (Kynsilehto, 2011; Penttinen and Kynsilehto, 2017), as these categories form a useful beginning for analyses of global mobility but may fix

and freeze these mobilities in a way that render the simultaneous multiplicity and overlaps between diverse categories unrecognisable. This unrecognizability, in turn, would not do justice to (re)humanising and decolonising the understanding of people on the move as full human beings.

Agency and victimhood

Victimisation and, indeed, as Hyndman and Giles (2011) argue, feminisation of refugees is a prevalent approach to forced migrants. With this Hyndman and Giles refer to the politics of mobility that would require 'genuine refugees' to stay confined in the spaces designated to them, most likely in the refugee camps established in the Global South. When the forcibly displaced grow tired with waiting in what often become protracted refugee situations (PRS) and begin to move onwards by their own initiative, they become threatening and not fully fitting into a stereotyped understanding of passive victims (Hyndman and Giles, 2011; also Malkki 1996). Hyndman and Giles' gendered reading of the nexus of immobility and mobility within forced displacement connects feminisation with passivity and victimhood, and masculinisation with agency that disconnects the agent(s) from deservingness reserved to those considered as victims.

'Undocumented' migrant journeys undertaken by the person's own initiative have become a booming field of inquiry. With this focus, researchers have examined others' lived experiences of these journeys (e.g. Collyer, 2007; Mainwaring and Brigden, 2016; Brigden, 2018) and engaged with one's own journey across countries (Khosravi, 2010). These analyses recognise and render visible the non-linear and often lengthy character of what Collyer (2007) has called 'fragmented journeys'. Along these journeys, moving from a place of departure to a perceived destination may take several years, and the destination may change depending on the opening possibilities and mounting hindrances along the way, such as border control measures and financial means available to pay for the next leg of the journey. The possibilities of navigating these uncertain and often violent landscapes also rely on unexpected, even random encounters, where gender figures in manifold ways (e.g. Brigden, 2018). Brigden's (2018) ethnographic work along the migration route from El Salvador via Mexico to the border of the United States shows how migrant women deploy creative strategies in order to protect themselves from diverse forms of violence along the route, for example by bonding with fellow travellers or native Mexicans to pass as family members,

and by resorting to traditionally feminine strategies such as docility. Her research shows also that it is no less unambiguous for men to navigate these routes: many of the men she talked to said that it was practically impossible to prevent or stop sexual assaults against their fellow travelling women, unless they were able to pass as family members. The cost of speaking out otherwise would have been being raped himself or the loss of one's life.

Feminist scholars have addressed sexual violence at borders from different perspectives. Framing these recurrent, practically systematic sexual assaults as the outcome of colonial legacies that the border system itself symbolizes, rather than characterizing it as a part of deviant sexualities of the colonized, they have argued that it is the broader landscape of inequality that needs to be addressed in order to be able to locate and redress the conditions of possibility for these forms of violence (Téllez, Simmons and del Hierro, 2018). Téllez, Simmons and del Hierro (2018) emphasise how sexual assaults are a rampant phenomenon on both sides of the US-Mexico border, including the confined spaces of immigration detention facilities where sexual violence enacted by border guards has been reported across diverse sites.[1] They highlight this pervasiveness of violence on both sides of the border in order to challenge the common place view on violent Latino masculinities that relies on colonial stereotypes.

The case of human smuggling has been analysed not only from the perspectives of violence and victimisation but also, as Sanchez (2017) argues, as an alternative pathway to mobility in a context where mobility from the Global South is increasingly criminalised (also Freedman, 2016; Kynsilehto, 2017). Even when researching cases framed as trafficking, Andrijasevic (2010) found out how the women she worked with were able to exert agency in diverse ways, despite the prevalent understanding that connects trafficking to victimhood only. As with the notion of choice as regards to different forms of global mobility more generally, also the notion of consent needs to be assessed carefully when seeking to distinguish human smuggling from human trafficking. This is often a matter of making decisions within a very limited scope of alternatives (Khosravi, 2010, pp. 20–21), which is conditioned by neoliberal capitalism and the uneven access to mobility across the globe.

Global mobility and care

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[1] See also Penttinen and Kynsilehto, 2017, chapter five for a discussion on such cases in the UK detention industry.

Feminist researchers have paid considerable attention to the role of care relations in global mobility. On the one hand, this has denoted an extensive interest in family migration (e.g. Kofman, 2004; Salaff, Wong and Greve, 2010). On the other hand, and one may argue in terms of academic production, this is even more so as regards to the notion of global care chains (GCC), a concept first developed by Arlie Hochchild (2000). The latter refers to migrants who travel long journeys from less affluent regions to perform care duties in more affluent destinations at private homes or institutional sites of care. Upon their departures, they often leave behind their immediate circle of care, for example minor children or ageing parents that results in 'surplus of love' in Global North destinations and, consequently, care deficit in the departure areas in the Global South. This research line has been well developed as it has proved as a useful tool to analyse gendered mobilities and the inequalities of care at the global level (e.g. Parreñas, 2001; Ehrenreich and Hochchild, 2003; Yeates, 2004; 2012; Huang, Yeoh and Toyota, 2012). The GCC concept has also been criticized for its unilinear and causal assumptions (Vaittinen, 2014), the ways in which it has focused on cis-women's experiences (Brown, 2016) and the ensuing heteronormative assumptions on transnational care-workers as married mothers (Manalansan IV, 2006; Pande, 2018). Moreover, feminist scholars have pointed out how care chains are not a transnational phenomenon only, but that similar perspectives are useful in analysing intra-country migration especially in countries such as China, where internal rural-urban mobility of Chinese citizens is highly regulated and thus likely to produce long-distance relations of care depending on various intersecting dimensions, most notably gender, rural-urban and socio-economic class (Fu, Su, and Ni 2018).

Immobility

In parallel with and connected to the analysis of mobility, there is the dimension of immobility that can be more or less chosen or forced. Within what could be called as chosen immobility, feminist scholars have sought to understand the decisions of those family members who stay put while others move (e.g. Ennaji and Sadiqi, 2008; Archambault, 2010). Moreover, staying behind is often related to restrictive policies governing family migration, which makes it impossible for family members to move even when willing to do so (e.g. Huang, Yeoh and Toyota, 2012; Chee, Yeoh and Shuib, 2012). This concerns both migrants who have moved for purposes of work and those who have managed to secure an

international protection status offering a lower form of protection than the Convention status, as high income requirements concern both in order to prove that their reuniting family members would not add to the social welfare costs of the receiving state. As to forced immobility, imprisonment of migrants and immigration detention is an extreme, yet globally a common way of limiting movement, of forcing people on the move into immobility within a closed space, the duration of which cannot necessarily be predicted in advance (Conlon, 2011). These spaces may be located at the margins of towns, or outsourced to external locations on remote islands (Mountz, 2011). In addition to addressing other political issues at stake as regards these forms of immobility, feminist scholars have shown how immigration detention is closely tied with multiple macro- and micro-economic concerns (Conlon and Hiemstra, 2016), and has become a profitable business in many countries.

Feminist peace research and the people on the move

It is then pertinent to ask, how would a feminist peace researcher address the question of human mobility? In order to ask this question, one needs to reflect on peace research, considering that peace research is both an institutional location, a discipline where academic degrees can be earned, and a broader multidisciplinary umbrella that brings together researchers otherwise located in diverse disciplinary fields but who share a commitment to enhancing nonviolence and global social justice. It is especially this latter dimension that brings together much of the feminist scholarship cited above, even if not all the authors identify primarily with peace research as such. Here I propose answering the question from two possible and necessarily broad starting points. Firstly, a peace researcher focusing on armed conflicts would perceive refugees fleeing wars as the most legitimate object of analysis. She/he would target these populations, engage with their gendered experiences of war and violence, and the conditions of flight. These include, for example, the extent to which gender and gender-related persecution is or is not recognized as an important dimension of becoming a refugee (Freedman, 2007; Sadoway, 2008; Jordan, 2009), or the ways in which gender-specificity is or is not taken into account when organising a particular refugee camp infrastructure.

As regards the latter, despite the existence of guidelines concerning the set-up of the refugee camp in a gender-aware manner, in practice these remain limited. One example of such lack of respect to these guidelines is the Moria camp in the Aegean island of Lesbos. This camp

was established as a first reception centre in September 2013 (FIDH, Migreurop and EMHRN, 2014, p. 68), with the aim of hosting the newly arrived asylum-seekers for a short period of less than two weeks, in order to perform a first identification and to orient them to appropriate services to lodge an asylum claim. The newly-arrived would then be allowed to continue to the mainland Greece. This practice continued despite the peak in arrivals over the year 2015, but got halted with the entry into force of the EU-Turkey statement on the March 20, 2016; a statement that is not an international agreement under democratic control, yet it had legal consequences immediately. Concerning the newly-arrived, territorial restriction was imposed on those who arrived to the Greek Aegean islands since the entry date, forcing them to stay on the islands where the reception facilities soon became overcrowded (e.g. Freedman, 2016). This overcrowding is a problem to men and women, adults and children alike, due to the lack of privacy and simply lack of space coupled with increasing desperation that has contributed to, for example, fights between different groups and fast transmission of diseases.

Another way would be to examine 'expatriates', used to refer to highly-skilled migrant moving across the globe to perform expert tasks usually for a defined period of time. These tasks may range from international finances to development cooperation and peace-keeping and civilian crisis management missions, entwining human mobility and more traditional peace and conflict research topics in an explicit manner. While this kind of global mobility belongs to the broader landscape of migrations, it is often not referred in a similar manner as, say, the mobilities of those with lower (recognized) skills level. What these labels reinforce and hide at the same time are the degrees of privilege that the people on the move are endowed with, expatriate being located at the upper scales of privilege, and serves as an example of how social class underpins the conceptualisations of people on the move. For feminist peace researchers concerned with social justice and decidedly unpacking manifold forms of hierarchies, these movements and their labels should not pass unnoticed.

The second broad starting point would be to begin from structural violence and concerns over social justice. This starting point would not restrict the focus on those fleeing violent conflicts only but could focus on migrant populations more broadly, including but not limited to refugees. Here, for example the global organisation of care and the unevenness of recognizing care needs across global scales, or a more general engagement with care relations as an integral part of global mobility, is a central dimension; one that builds on earlier

generations of feminist peace research (Vaittinen, 2017, pp. 51–64). This broad starting point has also entailed re-centring the body where feminist peace researchers have focused, for example, on the global forces playing upon the body compelled to cross borders for the purpose of engaging in sex work (Penttinen, 2008), or the ways in which asylum-seekers' bodies comply with and at the same time challenge state-centric definitions (Puumala, 2017). Feminist analysts have also examined border control infrastructure from intersectional perspectives, where the control of the body seeking to cross the border passes via complex technologies that build on particular construction of gender (Magnet and Rodgers, 2012), and theorized global justice beginning from the demented body in need of care that calls for care workers from distant locations to respond to these needs (Vaittinen, 2017).

Whichever the starting point, it is necessary to engage in intersectional analysis and understand people on the move as gendered, raced and classed individuals. These denominators or social positions are not classificatory identities only, but they result from manifold structural conditions, and are present in different ways in individual lives that may also change during the life course. In this regard, promising research areas in the thematic of human mobility are emerging for example from critical disability studies' perspectives that question the able-bodied assumptions of social scientific research (e.g. Yeo, 2017). In research that seeks to foreground the human body and address critically the continuum of mobility and immobility, the bodily and mental capacities of those undertaking or planning on undertaking migratory journeys are a central dimension of these trajectories.

Conclusions

By drawing on critical postcolonial insights and taking seriously not only issues related to violent conflicts and their gendered consequences on societies and individuals but also concerns of social justice at the global level, feminist peace researchers have a lot to offer to the study of human mobility. At the best case scenario, with its normative ethos and likelihood to engage beyond the academic ivory tower, this scholarship can provide important advice to policy makers and broader audiences, by challenging the populist and xenophobic tendencies that have gained room, again, in different parts of the globe.

To be able to fulfil its goal towards greater social justice, feminist peace researchers need to remain wary of the patterns and practices of categorization when analysing global mobilities,

especially the kinds of hierarchizations categories build upon. This includes the need to embrace intersectional analysis at full in our scholarship and practice. Intersectional analysis is bound to be incomplete, always in the making, in a world constituted of multiple kinds of inequalities that are not stable either. However, it is the quest for doing better, of doing more inclusively that drives us forward.

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